



***Cal* E·M·A**
CALIFORNIA EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT AGENCY

A Guide for Establishing a Local Assistance Center

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Prepared by the SEMS/SSCOT Recovery Committee
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Purpose

This guide was developed with the cooperation of local, state, federal and non-profit partners. It is provided as a reference to assist in the development of one or more 'one-stop' service facilities known as Local Assistance Centers (LACs). This guide may be used as a tool for decision makers when establishing a LAC. This guide may also be incorporated into disaster recovery planning activities such as exercises, drills and training.

For consistency and clarity, this guide is designed to reflect the five functions within the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). They are:

- Management
- Planning
- Operations
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration.

This is a systems approach that provides common terminology, unity of command, and integrated communications.

This guide is structured into function-specific checklists for LAC activities.

This guide is not intended to be the state's legal opinion on how to operate a LAC, nor does the state take any responsibility for any actions resulting from the local government's management of a LAC.

LAC Overview

Description

The LAC is normally staffed and supported by local, state and federal agencies, as well as non-profit and voluntary organizations. The LAC provides a single facility at which individuals, families and businesses can access available disaster assistance programs and services.

LACs have proven to significantly contribute to a streamlined recovery process and have been field-tested in numerous disasters and emergency events.

Mission

To assist communities by providing a centralized location for services and resource referrals for unmet needs following a disaster or significant emergency.

LAC Participation

Introduction	An effective LAC requires the coordination, cooperation, and participation of local, state and federal agencies, as well as voluntary organizations (see Attachment 1). Although private vendors can be beneficial to a community's recovery, vendor participation should be conducted outside of the LAC.
Local Government	City and/or county government officials are responsible for assessing the need for and the establishment of a LAC. Implementation of a LAC should be in coordination with California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA), as appropriate. The city/county is also responsible for coordinating the participation of local government, volunteers, community-based (CBOs) and private non-profit (PNPs) organizations.
State Agencies	<p>Cal EMA is responsible for coordinating the participation of state and federal agencies in a LAC. In cooperation with local government, Cal EMA will ensure an appropriate number and location of LACs are established based on disaster-specific criteria.</p> <p><i>Cal EMA may provide financial support for eligible costs associated with LAC operations through the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA). In order to implement CDAA, the Governor must have proclaimed a state of emergency that includes the impacted jurisdiction(s).</i></p>
Federal Agencies	Cal EMA will also coordinate the participation of any federal agency at a LAC. Examples of federal agency participation may include the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), etc. In addition, Cal EMA may request federal representatives to participate on the LAC Oversight Team (defined below).
PNPs, CBOs and Volunteer Organizations	PNPs, CBOs and Voluntary Organizations provide a myriad of services to individuals and families and often "bridge" the unmet needs of disaster victims. The primary benefit of co-locating these organizations with governmental agencies is the convenience to individuals and families. These organizations may also be requested to provide a media representative to coordinate media events, public service announcements and LAC interviews.

Operational Roles and Responsibilities

Oversight Team

The Oversight Team may be comprised of a total of 3-5 representatives from local government, Cal EMA, federal government, and PNPs as appropriate.

The Oversight Team provides direction to the Manager and LAC participants. The Oversight Team is responsible for the selection of a Manager and the development of a phased action plan that includes deactivation. In addition, the Oversight Team reviews and approves any procedures developed for LAC operations. The Oversight Team responsibilities also include addressing community outreach and evaluation of client satisfaction.

Prior to LAC operations, the Oversight Team should coordinate with Cal EMA to determine eligible and non-eligible LAC operational costs for reimbursement through state or federal disaster assistance programs.

In the event of multiple LACs, the Oversight Team ensures that disaster relief efforts are provided in a standardized and consistent manner throughout all LAC operations.

Manager

The Manager is appointed by the Oversight Team, but is not a member of the Team. The Manager is responsible for the implementation of the day-to-day operations of the phased action plan, including staffing.

In the event of multiple LACs, the Managers may periodically consult with each other. In coordination with the Oversight Team, LAC Managers ensure that unmet disaster recovery needs of the community are addressed.

Media Coordinator

The Media Coordinator, selected by the Oversight Team, will develop and distribute procedures for handling all media inquiries to all LAC participants.

The Media Coordinator will assist the Manager, LAC participants and any designated spokespersons in responding to all media inquiries and assist in the development of public information documents as necessary.

Operating Principles

LAC Principles

The Oversight Team, Manager and LAC participants shall strive to operate each LAC in accordance with the following principles:

- Mission-Focused: The day-to-day operations will be consistent with the LAC mission.
 - Scalability: Develop LACs that can rapidly and effectively size up or down to meet requirements of the local community.
 - Standardization: LACs will be consistently structured and operated throughout the state.
 - Accountability: LACs receiving federal and/or state funding may be subject to audit.
 - Interoperability: Technological systems and tools must be able to operate on different platforms by different agencies represented in the LAC.
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Management

General Activities

The Management functional activities provide for overall guidance, decision-making, and supervision of LAC operations. Through the directives of the Oversight Team, Management functional activities ensure that all operations are in accordance with the LAC mission.

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Conducting regular meetings.
- ✓ Conducting change of shift briefings as necessary.
- ✓ Ensuring media coordinator participates in all phases of LAC operations to ensure the public is kept informed.
- ✓ Ensuring that the operational activities are consistent with the direction of the Oversight Team.
- ✓ Coordinating LAC closure information with media coordinator at least two weeks in advance of actual closure.

Staffing

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Ensuring adequate number and appropriate classification of LAC participants.
- ✓ Providing adequate training to LAC participants as appropriate.
- ✓ Providing multi-lingual capabilities, as necessary.
- ✓ Ensuring adequate staffing of main telephone and reception at the LAC.

Continued on next page

Management, Continued

Health and Safety

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Ensuring sufficient number of LAC participants are trained in CPR and first aid.
 - ✓ Ensuring first aid kits and fire extinguishers are on-site.
 - ✓ Ensuring the facility has a completed fire inspection certification and site safety plan on record.
 - ✓ Ensuring that Worker's Compensation information is provided to LAC participants.
 - ✓ Assessing facility for any potential safety hazards and available emergency exits.
 - ✓ Ensuring availability of crisis counseling and/or stress debriefing for LAC participants as needed.
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Security

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Providing a safe environment for clients and LAC participants during normal operations and after hours by coordinating security operations with local law enforcement.
 - ✓ Providing locking mechanisms for doors, computer systems, files, etc.
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Management, Continued

Media

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Facilitating public awareness of the opening and closing of the LAC.
 - ✓ Ensuring responses to press inquiries are coordinated in accordance with media procedures.
 - ✓ Facilitating LAC visits of elected officials and the press.
 - ✓ Regularly evaluating public announcements and media releases.
 - ✓ Including local, state, and federal government public information representatives in appropriate internal briefings.
 - ✓ Coordinating with LAC Manager and Oversight Team to identify any public information issues or media needs.
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Liaison

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Providing a main point of contact in support of local, state and federal agency representatives.
 - ✓ Assisting the County Administrator and/or City Manager with “Letters of Appreciation” for all LAC participants.
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Planning

General Activities

The activities of the Planning function are performed by the Oversight Team. This Team is responsible for the initial planning activities of the LAC and the ongoing decision-making. The Oversight Team is also responsible for the development of a phased action plan, which includes deactivation. The LAC Manager however, facilitates after action planning and debriefing for all LAC participants, and implements the deactivation plan.

Action Planning

The Oversight Team activates and directs the activities of the LAC through the Manager in accordance with established action plans.

Deactivation

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Returning all local supplies, furniture, equipment, etc. to appropriate agencies.
 - ✓ Ensuring facility cleanup.
 - ✓ Ensuring facility owner is satisfied with condition of facility post-LAC operation through written agreement.
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Operational Review

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Planning and facilitating final debriefing session with all LAC participants, including a review of operational pros and cons.
 - ✓ Coordinating with LAC Manager to determine the need for stress debriefing for LAC participants.
 - ✓ Facilitating stress debriefing with local mental health officials, if necessary.
 - ✓ Preparing and distributing a report to all participating agencies and organizations. The report should document successful operational procedures and any identified issues that require resolution before a future LAC operation.
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Operations

General Activities

The Manager and all LAC participants are responsible for the day-to-day operational activities of providing service information and referrals to community members affected by a disaster.

Outreach

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Establishing and staffing a Referral Service Desk to assist incoming clients with resource information.
 - ✓ Distributing local jurisdiction agency information/handouts through the Referral Service Desk. Some examples of external resources that may also provide handouts include:
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Ethnic Community Councils
 - Counseling/Support Groups
 - Senior Service Organizations
 - Association of Realtors
 - Animal Control
 - Animal Humane Society
 - ✓ Maintaining local, geographic maps depicting disaster impact area.
 - ✓ Compiling and analyzing visitor intake information as outreach tool to identify target areas for additional outreach activities.
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Client Appointment System

After any disaster, there is always the potential for LAC operations to become overwhelmed by the numbers of potential clients. This is especially true during the initial days of the operation. Consideration should be given to establishing a client appointment system to provide the orderly and timely use of LAC resources. In past operations, an appointment system has been successfully implemented to run concurrently with normal LAC operations.

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Operations, Continued

Data Collection

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Compiling and analyzing daily LAC service statistics in cooperation with Cal EMA and program providers (i.e., how many people served, what programs were provided, etc.).
- ✓ Providing daily LAC service statistics reports to LAC Manager and Oversight Team for decision-making and advance planning.
- ✓ Providing daily LAC service statistics reports to the Media Coordinator for use in increasing community awareness of the LAC.
- ✓ Using the following forms that may be modified for specific LAC needs. These examples contain the elements that have been found useful for data collection purposes:
 - Client Sign-in Sheet (Attachment 2A). This form to be used at the reception area; information to be used for client triage and incorporated into the Daily Client Summary.
 - Triage: Client Routing Form (Attachment 2B). This form is completed by the registrar to route the clients to appropriate LAC participants. Each LAC participant may suggest additional stations.
 - Daily Client Summary (Attachment 2C). This form assists in determining trends in client flow, hours of operation and necessary schedule changes. The information for this form is obtained from the Client Sign-in Sheet.
 - Station Tally (Attachment 2D). This form is used by LAC participants to track the number of clients interviewed and served. This information is incorporated into the Station Tally Summary.
 - Weekly Station Summary (Attachment 2E). This form assists in determining trends in client flow. The information for this form is obtained from the Station Tally forms.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

A Customer Satisfaction Survey should be developed at the discretion of the Oversight Team. The survey may be used to identify specific target areas, systems improvements, etc. The data collected may be used for future planning. An exit interview (discussed below) may replace the Customer Satisfaction Survey.

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Operations, Continued

Exit Interview	Exit interviews may be conducted to ensure that each LAC client has received necessary and appropriate services and referrals. The Client Routing Form (Attachment 2B) can be used as a basis for this interview. The interview is designed to capture the client's satisfaction of the information provided, including referrals.
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Facility Evaluation	Each LAC participant is encouraged to provide a list of any identified facility changes that might improve their customer service capabilities in the future. The LAC Manager will utilize this information for future planning purposes.
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Logistics

General Activities

The activities of the Logistics function include the coordination of facilities, services, equipment and supplies in support of the LAC operations. Logistics processes service requests from the Manager and LAC participants.

Site Selection

Considerations should include (see Attachment 3 for sample LAC floor plan):

- ✓ Compatibility with the Office of Safety and Health Assessment (OSHA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements including facility size.
- ✓ In close proximity to individuals and families affected by the disaster.
- ✓ Convenient access to public transportation (e.g., highways, main thoroughfares, mass transit).
- ✓ Secured, lighted parking areas and walkways adequate for number of LAC participants and clients.
- ✓ In close proximity to available food services (e.g., restaurant, coffee shop).
- ✓ Adequate office space for processing applicants and confidential discussions with clients and LAC participants. (See Attachment 3 for formula for estimating square footage.)
- ✓ Sufficient number of telephone and data lines.
- ✓ Appropriate lighting, heating, ventilation, electrical, plumbing capabilities and restrooms.
- ✓ Availability of adequate janitorial and waste disposal services.
- ✓ Special needs:
 - Food and water for LAC participants and clients
 - Dressing rooms if clothing is provided
 - Locking storage for vouchers and checks, if appropriate
 - Space and provider for childcare.

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Logistics, Continued

Facility Equipment/ Supplies

Considerations should include:

- ✓ Access keys for Manager and LAC participants, as appropriate.
- ✓ Facsimile machine and computer printer(s) and paper.
- ✓ One telephone per voice line and backup communication system as necessary.
- ✓ Display area/desk for informational pamphlets, brochures, etc.
- ✓ One table or desk and at least two chairs per LAC participant.
- ✓ Additional chairs for client waiting area.
- ✓ Two computers with Internet access (one for use by LAC participants and one for client access).
- ✓ Photocopier (high speed copier with collating and stapling capabilities).
- ✓ Emergency equipment (e.g., fire extinguishers, first aid kits).
- ✓ Local public telephone directories.
- ✓ Janitorial and office supplies.

Identification and Signs

Considerations should include:

- ✓ Identification badges for all LAC participants.
- ✓ Permits necessary for legally posting LAC location.
- ✓ Multi-lingual LAC signs.
- ✓ Directions to the LAC from public routes.
- ✓ Direction of traffic flow within the LAC.
- ✓ Posting operational hours and changes, when necessary.

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Logistics, Continued

Internal Communica- tions

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Developing and distributing the following telephone directories:
 - Internal LAC participants
 - Emergency numbers for law, fire, ambulance, medical assistance, etc.
 - Information technology support.
 - ✓ Ensuring LAC participants are provided internal communication capabilities such as computer networking, messaging system, telephone transferring, etc.
-

Finance/Administration

General Activities

The Finance/Administration function includes tracking, analyzing and maintaining records of all financial and cost-accounting data of the LAC.

LAC costs may be reimbursed through state or federal disaster assistance programs. Accordingly, Finance/Administration should ensure that all cost data is documented and maintained in accordance with local, state and federal requirements and general accounting principles.

Accounting

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Tracking facility costs, such as furniture, janitorial and maintenance services, operational expenses, wages/benefits, supplies, and equipment.
 - ✓ Providing regular financial status reports to the LAC Manager and Oversight Team.
-

Administration

Functional activities to be considered:

- ✓ Maintaining time records for all staff or volunteers
 - ✓ Maintaining accurate records of all LAC expenses.
 - ✓ Maintaining any significant historical data of the LAC operations such as staff injuries, media events, etc.
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Attachment 1 – Potential Resources for LAC Participation

Local Resources	Description of Services
Planning, Zoning and Building Departments	Provides information regarding civil engineering services, site conditions, easements, land stability, right-of-ways, parcel maps, permits for sidewalks, sewers, safety assessments, etc.
Finance Department	Business license information and services; assist LAC with finance/administrative processes.
Fire Department	Coordinates with local law enforcement and health department for access/re-entry into restricted areas.
Office on Aging	Transportation and outreach services for senior citizens.
Office of Community Development	Short-term housing referrals.
Office of Economic Development and Employment	Referrals for small businesses or workers displaced by the event.
Police Department	Assist with security issues; signage (e.g., “This Property Not Abandoned”).
Public Information Officer	Dissemination of information to the media and the general public.
Public Works Department	Assists with debris removal, road clearing, and the community’s tree removal plan.
Chamber of Commerce	Provides information regarding consumer fraud awareness, legal assistance, insurance, and financial institutions.
Community Development Council	Provides information regarding planned construction, rebuilding, clean-up and selection of design professionals.
Apartment Associations	Provide listings of available apartments.
Information and Referral Service Agencies	Provide information regarding housing, replacement of personal property, financial assistance for rental expenses, and listings of short- and long-term rentals.
Board of Realtors	Provides listings of available rentals and other housing resources.
Housing Authority	Provides assistance to low-income families, referrals for students and apartment dwellers.
Utilities: Water, Waste, Power (gas and electric), Telephone	Provides assistance closing accounts, billing, transferring service, establishing new service, and referrals.
Mental Health Office	Referral services and crisis counseling.

State Resources	Description of Services
Department of Social Services (DSS)	Administers the State Supplemental Grant Program (SSGP), which provides grant funds for unmet recovery needs to individuals and families.
Department of Mental Health (DMH)	Coordinates the implementation of federal crisis counseling programs through the local mental health offices.
Employment Development Department (EDD)	Administers the federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance Program when implemented and regular unemployment assistance.
Department of Insurance (CDI)	Provides information regarding insurance issues, such as policy retrieval, claims filing, expediting claim settlements, etc.
Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA)	Provides counseling and referral services to the State Contractor's Licensing Board to provide licensing information, to help protect disaster victims against fraudulent contractor practices, etc.
Contractors State License Board	Provides guidance in obtaining licensed contractors and provides information to help protect against fraudulent contractor practices, etc.
Franchise Tax Board (FTB)	Provides advice for claiming losses when filing state income tax returns.
California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA)	Coordinates and provides mitigation and planning efforts as well as coordinates the implementation of state and federal assistance programs throughout the state.
California Veterans Affairs (CALVET)	Provides guidance for obtaining CALVET loan assistance.

Federal Resources	Description of Services
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	Provides assistance dependent on unmet needs and resources available.
U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)	Provides low-interest loans for personal and real property damages/losses as well as business losses.
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Provides low-interest loans for damages/production losses related to agriculture, ranch, and aquaculture activities. USDA may also provide food commodities based on identified unmet needs of community and assistance to low-income disaster victims to rebuild their residences. With the exception of quarantines, USDA assistance is augmented by SBA economic injury loan program.
Internal Revenue Service (IRS)	Provides advice for claiming losses when filing federal income tax returns.
Veterans' Administration (VA)	Provides guidance in obtaining VA death benefits, pensions, insurance settlements and adjustments to VA-insured home mortgage owners.
Social Security Administration	Provides assistance with disability, death and survivor benefits.
Legal Services	Provides legal counseling that may include replacing legal documents, transferring titles, resolving contracting disputes, etc.

Voluntary Organizations	Description of Services
Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD): American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Mennonites, Church World Services, Seventh Day Adventist, etc.	May provide the following services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental assistance, prescription medicines, eyeglasses, etc. • Financial assistance for emergency home repair or replacement of essential household items, etc. • Labor for debris removal and/or home repair, etc.
Local Food Distribution Centers	Provide emergency food through voluntary resources as well as through organized agencies.
Animal Rescues: Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), California Animal Response Emergency System (CARES)	Locates and/or provides shelters for animals, lost and found for pets, etc.

Attachment 2A – Client Sign-In Sheet

Local Assistance Center
Client Sign-In Sheet (Please Print)

Date

Page ____ of ____

	Name	Time
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Attachment 2B – Triage: Client Routing Form

Local Assistance Center Client Routing Form

Client Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Station Number	LAC Organization	This station is recommended ✓	Visited ✓	Provided Information ✓	Recommended Referral (Explain)	Follow- up Required ✓

You may visit LAC stations other than those recommended.

Please return this form to the receptionist before exiting the LAC.

Attachment 2C – Client Count Summary

Page ____ of ____

Local Assistance Center

Day of Operation	Date	Day	(Time Span Increment)	(Time Span Increment)	(Time Span Increment)	Daily Total

Attachment 2D – Station Tally

Page ____ of ____

Local Assistance Center

Station Number: _____

LAC Organization: _____

Date	Clients Served (tally mark)	Daily Total

Attachment 2E – Weekly Station Summary

Week of:

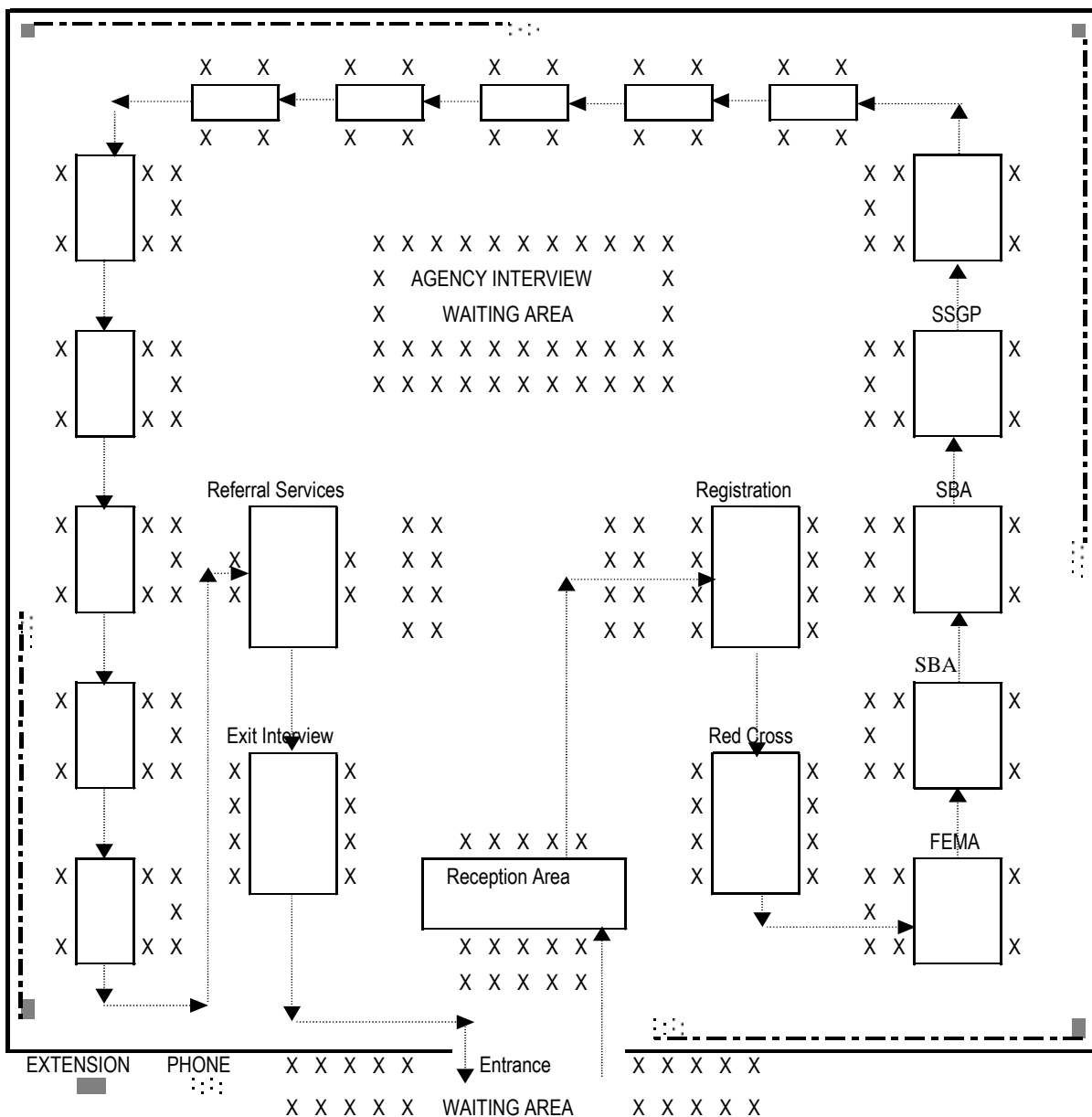
Page ____ of ____

Local Assistance Center

Station Number	LAC Organization	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Weekly Total

Attachment 3 – Sample Floor Plan

The diagram below represents floor space of approximately 5,000 square feet (ft²). Blank tables



Formula for estimating square footage:

150 ft² for each LAC participant PLUS 50 ft² for each client that could be in the LAC at a given time

Example: A center to accommodate 10 LAC participants and 30 clients at any given time would require a minimum of 3,000 ft²: (150 ft² x 10 LAC participants) + (50 ft² x 30 clients).

NOTE: LACs may require more or less square footage based on the size and magnitude of the event. Partitions of some type may be necessary if one table is used to interview more than one client.